

“Prepping for Harvest”
7th Sunday after Pentecost
July 19, 2020
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Romans 8:12-25
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Poem: “Field of Green Wheat” by Vincent van Gogh

From a plain packet of seeds
Comes sun-sweetened stalks
Seasoned by wind and rain
Birds diving, mice hiding
Grasshoppers singing, spiders weaving
In a sea of wheat that will someday
Become bread to eat.

Back to gardening from last week – making sure we are planting seeds of the Gospel – that of kindness, of love, of trusting in God and from last week’s story, making sure we are not planting kitty litter.

I would like to begin this morning with these idea for us to ponder. Whenever Jesus begins a parable with “the kingdom of heaven is like” – we can translate that to “this is the very essence of God” or “the very essence of who God is – is like” which can help us imagine who God is and paints for us a picture of God’s nature. I’ve always tried to get us to use imagery to help us paint a picture from the Gospels to help us understanding Scripture.

In my gardening experience with my mama, we would harvest the seeds of the current year and store them in a jar for next year’s planting. We didn’t use any chemicals or insecticides – but we would gather some cow manure from the fields or old wood chips from chopping wood would be mixed into the ground soil. One thing

we could count on growing amongst the plants were the useless weeds. Weeds if we recall are not good for much, maybe fuel for fire after they are dried up and some annoyance to gardeners. Weeds are in constant competition for the moisture and nutrients of the soil and in competition for the sunlight above ground. It is a never ending and delicate task to pull weeds out of the garden. If we think about this, the world around us is in constant competition for our attention, just like these weeds. There is so much going on in our lives that the daily demands tend to consume our lives. As the wheat is in constant competition with weeds out in the fields for nourishment and sunlight – our call from God is in constant competition with the world around us. Our daily living on this planet requires nourishment and care, especially during this time of a pandemic, even to a point where it is difficult to recognize God’s call for and to us. Where is God amongst all this crisis when people are dying from this unsee-able virus? This is a time when prayer and discernment come in and when trusting in each other becomes vital. “When we can’t – God can” now takes on a new meaning when many seem to have come to their wits end just trying to keep their heads above water. Here is another important point Iao Church and Virtual World – a time such as this requires us as a church and society to make sure that all voices and ideas are being heard. Requires that we take time to really sit and listen to one another. No one person, including this pastor has all the right answers which is why I rely on the entire church and community partners for guidance, ideas, and input to make sure we are not nurturing weeds in our midst. This is the wheat that is growing amongst our communities.

Let me describe then the noxious weed. The noxious weed looks remarkably like the wheat as they both grow up together. So, if the farmer tries to pull one, he may end up pulling the wheat instead of the weed or may end up pulling both out. One cannot tell the difference between both the wheat and the noxious weed plant

until they mature out in the field. The noxious weed was and is considered harmful, poisonous and radiates a toxic fume. For this reason, it did a lot of damage to the wheat fields and why the farmers did not like them at all. Another reason why the weed was not pulled until it matured in the field where it would be separated from the wheat. The weed would be put off to the side and used for fuel when it dried, and the wheat would be stored in the barn.

For many of us, we have been wondering about what is going to happen to us with this unsee-able virus? What's going to happen to our children, our parents, our community? How can we still be a church – how can we still be “people of God?” What does our future look like? How are we going to feed our families in need? Will we ever be a “traditional” type of Church again? As our time away from each other continues to be extended – minds and hearts begin to wonder off and ask these and many other questions. The “what abouts” – the “what if’s” – the “what if” questions begin to eat us up from the inside. Some of these things that begin to grow in us might be like the noxious weed that has a tendency of poisoning our call if we are not careful. But before we answer these questions in a more biblical way – let me tell you about how in World War II Hitler's army overran France and established a Nazi government there that virtually wiped out any sort of French nation or government. There was a French government in exile in England, but in France itself there was only a small group of people in the resistance. They were a hopeless and nearly powerless minority, praying for help, but the answer seemed always to be "No." What should they do? Would there ever be a France again? Should they still be loyal, should they still cling to their own nation?

Their struggle both as resistance fighters and in wondering what in the world the outcome would be – went on for several years. Finally, this modern-day parable was worked out by force. The Allied armies liberated France and drove the Nazis into

retreat and eventual surrender. And as this happened, the faithful were seen! (The wheat out in the field amongst the noxious weeds.) The members of the resistance who had not cooperated with the Nazis rose up. And others of less faith or courage followed these loyalists, so France could be reestablished.

Let us close with this Iao Church and virtual world. What then shall we do Iao Church and beloved brothers and sisters out in our virtual world? Amid this pandemic, what is it that God is calling us to do? How do we resist the temptation that may linger in our mind and in our soul – temptation of giving up hope for a bright tomorrow? Do we have the toxic noxious weed of doubt growing amongst us? The toxic noxious weed of fear, of anger, of anxiety growing amongst our church wheat fields. As we move forward into the unknown future, I am remembering a song by Christy Lane – “One day at a time sweet Jesus – that’s all I’m asking from you” – that is how we move forward Iao Church. One day at a time virtual world, one step at a time. Let us not worry about being the “traditional” church at this moment in time, let us focus on being the church. Even after we return into our sanctuary, “traditional” may look different than what we are used to, especially since we must continue with our virtual worship. I cannot say this often enough, we need to remain focused on our mission statement. Remain a faithful Church as you have been. Prepare ourselves for the harvester to come as we remain deeply rooted on good soil. **Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho, and Alleluia.**